

HIV Communication: Using Preferred Language to Reduce Stigma



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Stigmatizing	Preferred
HIV infected person	Person living with HIV, PLHIV. Do not use “infected” when referring to a person. Use <i>People First Language</i> , which emphasizes the person, not their diagnosis
HIV or AIDS patient, AIDS or HIV carrier	
Positives or HIVers	
Died of AIDS, to die of AIDS	Died of AIDS-related illness, AIDS-related complications, or end stage HIV
AIDS virus	HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis not a virus it cannot be transmitted)
Full-blown AIDS	There is no medical definition for this phrase, simply use the term AIDS, or Stage 3 HIV.
HIV virus	This is redundant; use HIV.
Zero new infections	Zero new HIV acquisitions/transmissions
HIV infections	HIV transmissions, diagnosed with HIV, PLHIV
HIV infected	living with/diagnosed with HIV or contracted/acquired HIV
Number of infections	Number diagnosed with HI or /number of HIV acquisitions
Became infected	Contracted, acquired, diagnosed with
HIV-exposed infant	Infant exposed to HIV
Serodiscordant couple	Serodifferent, magnetic, or mixed status couple
Mother to child transmission	Vertical transmission/perinatal transmission
Victim, Innocent Victim, Sufferer, contaminated, infected	Person living with HIV, survivor, warrior (Do not use “infected” when referring to a person)
AIDS orphans	Children orphaned by loss of parents/guardians who died of AIDS related complications
AIDS test	HIV test (AIDS is a diagnosis, there is not an AIDS test)
To catch AIDS, To contract AIDS, Transmit AIDS, To catch HIV	An AIDS diagnosis, developed AIDS, to contract HIV (AIDS is a diagnosis, which cannot be passed from one person to the next)
Compliant	Adherent
Prostitute or prostitution	Sex worker, sale of sexual services, transactional sex
Promiscuous	This is a value judgment and should be avoided instead use “having multiple partners”
Unprotected sex	Condomless sex with PrEP, Condomless sex without PrEP, sex not protected by condoms, sex not protected by antiretroviral prevention methods
Death Sentence, Fatal condition or life-threatening condition	HIV is a chronic health condition, a manageable health condition (as long as people are in care and treatment)
“Tainted” blood; “dirty” needles	Blood containing HIV; shared needles
Clean, as in “I am clean are you?”	Referring to yourself or others as being “clean” suggests that those living with HIV are dirty. Avoid this term
“a drug that prevents HIV infection”	a drug that prevents the transmission of HIV
End HIV, End AIDS	End HIV transmission, Be specific: are we ending HIV or AIDS?

Thanks to those who have assisted in the creation and dissemination of this information.
We continue to educate in order to reduce stigma and improve the quality of life for those living with HIV.
In honor of those who have gone before us and those who continue to advocate for human rights.